

# The Icelandic Canadian

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## Cooperation in Preserving Our Heritage

The year 1952-53 will mark an important milestone in the struggle of the Icelandic ethnic group to preserve their language and cultural heritage on this continent. In order to grasp the full significance of what has happened and is happening it is well to be clear on what is meant by the term "the Icelandic ethnic group", what problems are common to the whole group and what would appear to be the common objectives. Only in so far as events of the year appear to fit into that general picture can they be viewed in their proper perspective.

Here the words "Icelandic Ethnic Group" are given a very wide meaning. The term includes all people in Canada and the United States of Icelandic descent whether of the full blood or mixed and it also includes people related by marriage to members of the group. It is obvious that a very wide range is covered. In the first place there are those whose mother tongue is Icelandic and who speak excellent Icelandic and are well acquainted with Icelandic literature. It is fair to say that in their thoughts and in their affections they often cross the ocean. Then there are others, born in Canada or the United States, whose mother tongue is English and who speak very broken Icelandic and in some cases do not understand one word of Icelandic. This is particularly true in the case of children of the so called "mixed marriages"

and people who have drifted from their Icelandic moorings and appear to have been swallowed up in the national streams on this continent. — Strange though it may appear to those who do not understand the strength and depth of Icelandic traits many people in this seemingly lost group have a very fond place in their hearts for their Icelandic forebears, and, what is even more important, are very quick to join in with their fellow citizens of the same ethnic group, be it on purely social grounds or in service for a common cause.

We here in Canada, when we seek to limit our thoughts and words to the group, call ourselves "Icelandic Canadians". With a few exceptions there is no parallel in the United States. This is mainly because national sentiment over there is so strong that the hyphen is seldom used and the name of the nation of origin disappears. But hyphen or no hyphen there can be no doubt that people of our kin across the line share our sentiments. This magazine is widely read in the United States, mainly because the readers over there know that they have much in common with their fellow readers here and are not greatly concerned though the name of the magazine may fit only a portion of the people for whom it is published.

In the Icelandic language we used to call ourselves "Vestur-Íslendingar".

That hyphenated word appears to be disappearing, which may be unfortunate, and frequently at the present time, particularly on formal occasions, one hears such words as "Íslendingar í Vesturheimi" "Árþing Íslendinga í Vesturheimi."

Names and words are of little moment. We are concerned with our people as one of the ethnic groups in North America. The problem confronting them is the ways and means of keeping the group together. Only then can we hope to preserve for the future our common language, our cultural heritage and traditions.

Very little of practical and enduring value can be accomplished without organizations and living institutions.

Three types of organizations appear to be necessary: an organization where Icelandic is the medium of expression; another in which English is in the main the medium of expression; and then a third organization recruited from our youth, especially from students and other groups of young people who, it is expected, will provide the leadership of tomorrow. Here fresh material will be available every fall when our teen-age boys and girls leave the public schools for centres of higher education.

It is so elementary that it need hardly be placed on the record that there must be close cooperation among the three groups if the best results are to be achieved.

There are many institutions that could be enumerated as necessary in the furtherance of the common cause, as for instance the press, the churches and national holiday committees. — Only one need be mentioned here—the

Chair in Icelandic Language and Literature in the University of Manitoba.

The Icelandic National League with its Chapters in the various Icelandic settlements on both sides of the international boundary, has been the answer to the call for an organization of the first type. The Icelandic Canadian Club with its magazine reaching out to every Icelandic district and to individuals scattered far and wide is the answer to the need of the second type of organization.

On January 13, 1953, a club came into existence which was the response to the need of an organization of the third type. On that day, after some preliminary meetings and discussions in homes and in groups, about seventy-five young people, mostly university students met and formed The Leif Eiriksson Club. In its organization the club is independent, but it is closely associated with the Icelandic Canadian Club. The relationship is expressed in the following words:

"Cooperation with representation in matters of mutual interest."

The report in this magazine of the annual banquet and dance of the Icelandic Canadian Club shows how effective this cooperation can be. At the gathering there were young people, middle aged people, old people. All mixed freely and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. A purely Icelandic atmosphere permeated the whole gathering and all could feel the common bond—loyalty to a language and a culture which is precious to them all. The remarks made by Gestur Kristjánsson the president of the Leif Eiriksson Club in response to words of welcome by Prof. Skuli Johnson, appear elsewhere in this number of the magazine.

They indicate very clearly how strong the common bond of fellowship is and how anxious even the young people are to perpetuate an interest in Icelandic language and literature.

The annual convention of the Icelandic National League, held on February 23-4-5 last, provided another occasion for giving expression to the growing sense of unity in the Icelandic group. Three concerts are held in conjunction with the convention, one by the Chapter Frón, one by The Icelandic Canadian Club and one by the National League itself. At the second concert, which was under the auspices of The Icelandic Canadian Club, greetings were brought from The Leif Eiriksson Club by its secretary, Mr. Erlingur Eggertson. Similar greetings, in both English and Icelandic, were brought by its president Mr. Kristjansson to the Icelandic National League at its closing programme.

But for the record and the future close and harmonious cooperation of these three organizations, the most important event was the unanimous passing of a resolution of fundamental import on the floor of the convention on the second day of its deliberations. The resolution was moved by the President of the Icelandic Canadian Club and seconded by the President of the Leif Eiriksson Club, both members of the Chapter Frón. Dr. Richard Beck and Rev. Eiríkur Brynjólfsson spoke strongly in favor of the resolution and the thoughts that gave rise to it. In English the resolution is as follows:

"The Icelandic National League in America agrees with other organizations who seek to promote the cause of Icelandic culture, that in order that the cooperation be as close as possible it is essential that it be based upon an appropriate foundation and approves of the following as a statement of same:

Cooperation with representation in matters of mutual interest".

The address delivered by Rev. H. S. Sigmar, which he entitled "The Icelandic Canadian Family", the main part of which appears elsewhere in this issue, shows how very general is the thought that all the people of the Icelandic ethnic group should be included in the one large Icelandic family.

With the Chair in Icelandic Language and Literature established on a permanent foundation in the University of Manitoba; with Professor Finn-bogi Gudmundsson duly installed and already hard at work; with the launching of a new organization of the young people; with a unanimous agreement upon the basis of cooperation among our organizations; and finally, and this is perhaps most important of all, with the firm resolve in our minds that we shall reach out to all members of the Icelandic family on this continent, that they may combine their efforts in service for a common cause, we have reason to be optimistic for the future. We have reason to be thankful and in humility we approach our tasks and ask for guidance in our efforts.

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Miss Lois Melsted graduated with her R. N. degree from the Royal Columbian School of Nursing at New Westminster, B. C., in Sept., 1951. She

is a first cousin of Kenneth Leo Melsted, and a daughter of Elmer Melsted of Olivier, B. C., and his wife, the former Helena Moulton of Wynyard.

## WINS SCHOLARSHIP

Herman Arason, 29, of Glenboro, Man., is one of two young Canadian Farmers to be awarded the Nuffield Foundation Scholarship, which means they will visit the United Kingdom

must be farming on their own, or in a partnership. Mr. Arason farms 320 acres, while the successful candidate from the East, William Cairns of P.E.I. farms 200 acres. They leave for England in March.



Herman Arason

Herman Arason has been active in 4-H club work and has been directly connected with the Glenboro Junior Seed Growers' Club for the past seven years. He graduated in 1950 from the Diploma course in agriculture at the U. of M. He took part in the Kiwanis public speaking contest in 1949 and after winning in his own district, he placed second in the provincial contest. He has since taken active interest in co-operatives in his home district.

On March 6, a social gathering was held in the I.O.O.F. hall, Glenboro in honor of the 4-H Clubs of Glenboro and district, and in honor of Mr. Arason, before his leaving for England. He was presented with luggage cases and a brief case.

and spend six months studying agriculture on the Old Country farms. This is the third successive year this scholarship has been awarded, through the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, one going to Western Canada and one to the East. Candidates

Herman is the son of August and Aurora Arason, of Glenboro, his grandparents being the well known Argyle pioneers, Skapti and Anna Arason who were among the first settlers there. His maternal grandparents, Olgeir and Vilborg Frederickson were also early settlers in the district.

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# THE NORSE SPIRIT

by Prof. Richard Beck

An Address delivered at the Tenth Anniversary Banquet of the Viking Club, Winnipeg, Friday evening, November 28, 1952.

For this historical occasion I have chosen as my subject: "The Norse Spirit", using the word "Norse" in its broad sense, "Scandinavian", which is but another way of saying that I am going to discuss "The Viking Spirit". In dealing with the subject on that wide and all-inclusive basis, I am, naturally, thinking in terms of all the five Northern countries, the great-hearted people of Finland included, because of the close historical and cultural ties of those nations.

As the rainbow, in all its glory, is made up of many colors, similarly, in a figurative sense, "The Norse Spirit" consists of many elements or aspects, which can only be dealt with briefly in a short banquet address.

"The Norse Spirit" is, in the first place, an **adventurous spirit**, and at the same time a **heroic spirit**, for obviously it requires courage to venture out into the unknown, whether on sea or land, and face fearlessly whatever fate may bring, and our Norse ancestors were pronounced fatalists. The Viking period in the history of the Northern nations has also rightly been called "The Heroic Age of Scandinavian", which is the exact title of a concise but very informative book on the subject, published last year by Professor G. Turville-Petre, Lecturer in Icelandic Literature at the University of Oxford.

The adventurous and heroic spirit of the Scandinavians of old is indeed written large in the annals of that re-

markable period in history, in great deeds that still live vividly in song and story and warm the heart of every full-blooded Viking descendant.

Vikings from all the Scandinavian countries took, as is well known, part in their historic journeys, although the geographical location of the homeland largely determined the routes selected; the Swedes primarily heading east, the Danes southeast and south, the Norwegians southwest and west. Eventually, the far-flung expeditions of these fearless rovers and explorers encircled all of Europe, and carried them still farther afield, all the way across the Atlantic to the eastern shores of the Western World.

In her excellent book, **Edda and Saga**, Dame Bertha S. Phillpotts has strikingly portrayed the adventurous and heroic spirit of the Scandinavians of yore, the Vikings, in the following paragraph

"History records how long and how diverse were the ways which were trodden or sailed by these Northern peoples, but perhaps the imagination is more readily stirred by inscriptions cut in their own Runic alphabet on rocks or great boulders set up to the memory of the dead. There is the Runic stone on the island of Berezanij on the Black Sea: "Grani made this grave-mound in memory of Karl, his comrade". There is what seems to be a lament for a lost leader carved on the marble lion which adorned the Greek harbour at Pireus and is now at

Venice: "Warriors cut the runes . . . Swedes set this on the lion." Two score or so of stones still stand in Sweden commemorating men who fell in far-off countries in the tenth and the eleventh centuries, among them a stone at Gripsholm:

"Tola had this stone raised to the memory of her son Harald, Ingvar's brother. Gallantly they sought gold afar . . . they perished south in Arabia." . . . Then there is the stone set up to two warriors: "God help well their souls, but their bodies lie in London." The most remote and one of the latest of these strange records is that recently found in Baffin's Bay and only half decipherable. It is set up by three men, Icelanders or settlers in Greenland, who "piled these cairns and cleared . . ." —we shall never know what."

To be sure, the Vikings were bucan-  
eers and adventurers, often cruel and  
ruthless, but let it also be remembered  
that their far-flung activities were con-  
structive no less than destructive; they  
were the founders of cities and build-  
ers of communities; they stimulated  
commerce by opening up new trade-  
routes on the sea and land. Culturally,  
they received much from the nations  
with which they came in contact, but  
they also made significant contribu-  
tions to the development of those  
nations and left their marks on the  
speech and the character of the people.  
(Mac-Aulay, for instance, is nothing  
but Olson or Olafson in reverse, a  
good name in any language.)

Dame Phillpotts correctly stresses  
the cultural and constructive side of  
Viking life and activities in the fol-  
lowing statement from her brilliant  
book, mentioned before:

"Wherever these peoples settled,

the stories and ideas incorporated in  
the Eddic poems went with them. We  
know this, although the poems were  
only written down in one country, and  
that country Iceland. Whenever a  
stonemason of Scandinavian stock  
wanted something to carve on a mem-  
orial stone, whether he was in the Isle  
of Man, or in Northern England, or  
in Sweden, or in the Baltic island of  
Gotland, it was from this stock of  
stories that he took his subject, just  
as readily as did the Norwegian wood-  
carver or the Icelandic embroideress.

Old Norse literature, then, belongs  
to a time when Norse was one of the  
most widely spread languages of Eur-  
ope. We must not think of it as a  
language spoken chiefly by peasants  
and barbarians. It was the speech of  
men who established towns and com-  
merce wherever they went, of brilliant  
administrators, of legislators whose  
word "law" superseded the old English  
"doom"; of conquerors who saw,  
hundreds of years in advance of their  
time, that a free tenant was better  
than a serf; of men, who, in Nor-  
mandy, laid the foundations of the  
most highly organized state in Europe,  
and prepared the way for the Norman  
conquest of England."

This adventurous and heroic spirit  
has characterized the Scandinavians  
down to our day, witness the example  
of the great Danish seaman, Captain  
Kurt Carlsen, whose determination to  
stay with his ship in the face of over-  
whelming odds fired the imagination  
of the whole world. To be sure, he  
was not granted to bring his ship into  
port, which in no way detracts from  
his heroism and stern sense of duty,  
and thereby he further became a mem-  
orable personification of another fund-  
amental aspect of the Norse spirit and

philosophy of life, namely, the realization "that defeat well met magnifies a man more than any success".

The Norse spirit is also a **pioneering spirit**, as we have already seen in our brief survey of Viking activities in ancient times, for the Scandinavians of old, who roamed the seven seas, "sailed beyond the sunset and the stars"; discovered both new sea routes and many new lands, including, as already mentioned, the North American continent itself. This pioneering spirit spans the centuries, from Leif Ericson's first crossing of the Atlantic in 999, or thereabouts, to those airborne Vikings of today who, only a few days ago, became the first to fly their plane across the polar icecap from Los Angeles to Copenhagen, blazing a new trail literally, we may say, midst the stars.

Nor do we have to go that far afield to see ample evidence of the Norse pioneering spirit; it is written eloquently and unforgettable in the fruitful achievements of the settlers from all the Northern countries, who have in many ways made such a notable and lasting contribution to the building of the great Province of Manitoba and the great City of Winnipeg, no less than to my great home-state of North Dakota and my fine home-city of Grand Forks, to name but a few illustrations. We of this part in the country, in particular, are today reaping the harvest of the heroic, pioneering spirit of those settlers, as well as the labors of other pioneers, all of whom as has been well said: "founded in the wilderness the realm we inhabit, and died in faith of generations yet to be."

The Norse Spirit has other aspects, no less fundamental. It is a **liberty-lov-**

**ing spirit**. It was so in the olden days, when Norwegians in large numbers refused to submit to oppression in the old home-land and migrated to Iceland to establish there the first Republic north of the Alps. There we have, as has been rightly emphasized, a classic illustration of the deep-rooted Norse love of freedom. That spirit of independence was put to a particularly severe test in Norway and Denmark during the Nazi occupation in World War II. Both nations stood the test nobly, although at a great cost; we need merely recall the loss at the hands of the enemy of the great Danish dramatist Kai Munk and the great Norwegian lyric poet Nordahl Grieg. And it was Grieg who summed up, in an immortal fashion, the very heart core of the Norse love of freedom, our time-honored tradition of personal liberty, in his poem "Vi skal komme igjen" (We Shall Come Again) written in 1940, when he says:

Det fødtes i oss en visshet:  
frihet og liv er ett,  
saa enkelt, saa unndvædig  
som menneskets aandedrett.  
Vi følte da trelldommen truet  
at lungene gispet i nød  
som i en sunken ubaat . . .  
Vi vil ikke dø slik død

Born is this truth within us  
Freedom and life are one,  
A union indivisible  
As breath and the life of man.  
As in a sinking U-boat—  
When slavery's threat drew nigh  
For breath our lungs were gasping . . .  
This death we will not die."

The Norse Spirit is also a **law-abiding spirit**; respect for law and order has characterized the people of the

North since ancient days; liberty under the law has been and still is the key-stone of the Scandinavian concept of personal freedom. "Með lögum skal land byggjast, en ei með ólögum eyðast" (Ved lov skal land bygges, men ei ved ulov ödelegges—By law shall the land be built up, not by lawlessness destroyed). This famous ancient saying embodies strikingly the high Norse respect for law and legal justice. The Scandinavians believe profoundly in "a state based on law, a society administered in accordance with law, a community founded on respect for human rights and human values."

At the same time as it has retained the various aspects briefly considered, the adventurous, the heroic, the pioneering, the liberty-loving and law-abiding elements, the Norse spirit has increasingly become a **progressive spirit**, directed into new and constructive social progress in many fields, nationally and internationally. That great friend of all Scandinavians and other groups of foreign origin in this country, Dr. Watson Kirkconnell, generously and excellently summed up that aspect of the Norse spirit in his "Salute to Pioneers" (published in his challenging book **Twilight of Liberty**), when he made Canadians descendants of Scandinavian forbears speak as follows:

"Vikings we are yet, but the nations from which we have sprung have long since forsaken foreign conquest and roving invasion for a more excellent way — the far more difficult adventure of self-conquest and self-realization. Our highly educated nations are born individualists, but they have come to look beyond raw liberty to social justice and communal welfare, Scandinavia leads the world in its devoted exploration of the uncharted seas of

social freedom, not in the name of doctrinaire revolution nor in the name of some rigid doctrinaire worship of state, but in the name of the spirit of man. Touch the social welfare work of Canada at any point and there you will find a Scandinavian, labouring devotedly for an ampler ideal of human life." We are grateful to our friend, a great Canadian, for this generous tribute, but it also constitutes a reminder and a challenge to us.

The Scandinavian spirit, for it is also a **genuinely peace-loving spirit** has found a memorable expression in the notable part which the nations of the North have taken, first in the League of Nations, and more recently in the deliberations and activities of the United Nations; this, too, should be to us a matter of gratification and even more so a source of inspiration.

Such, briefly, is our **spiritual heritage**, many-sided, rich, challenging.

We do not live in a vacuum racially, historically or spiritually speaking; we are a link in the chain of the generations, for we are old when we are born whether we realize it or not. The fundamental truth an American poet has recently expressed in these striking lines:

"I am my country; I my race.  
The sum of all that came before  
My forbears find abiding place  
Winthin my core."

We of Scandinavian birth or origin are the bearers of a great and noble spirit, the heirs of a rich cultural heritage in literature and art, embodying that spirit. Let us recall the wise words of the great Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen. In his penetrating and stirring drama **Brand** he makes one of



characters say: "Ej dverg blir mandshjö skjönt han har en Goliath til oldefar" (The dwarf does not attain to the stature of a man, just because he had a Goliath as a great-grandfather). But Ibsen was wise enough to know that this is only part of the truth, for he makes another character in the same drama reply immediately: "Der ligger vekst i store minnir" which may be translated: "Great memories bear in them the seeds of growth", or more simply, "Great memories are a source of inspiration". The pages of history of any civilized nation are studded with illustrations proving that fundamental truth, and that is not least true of the history of our own Northern nations, which frequently in their hour of need and trial have drawn strength from their past achievements. Truly it has been said: "The finest stimulus to

great achievements in the future is a consciousness of great achievements in the past."

Let us not neglect that source of strength and inspiration; let us make our noble spiritual and cultural heritage a vital force in the life of the nation of which we are a part, whether it be Canada or the United States of America.

We can, therefore, best celebrate an occasion like this by not merely basking in the reflected glory of our ancestors and contemporaries, but rather by dedicating ourselves, heart and soul, to the ideals interwoven in our racial and national spirit and to the great causes for human freedom and progress facing us in our turbulent world.

There, ladies and gentlemen, is a challenge worthy of the Norse Spirit!

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## John Myrdal Joins U.S. Engineering Firm

Last January 28, **Jon Gudni Myrdal** left Winnipeg for California, for his new position with The International Engineering Co. Inc., which has its head office in San Francisco.

Jon will be attached to The Electrical Design department on Hydro-electric Power Plant Design, consisting of planning and laying out of electrical equipment for the erection and construction of Hydro Power projects.

Jon, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Gudni Myrdal of undar, Man., was graduated as B.Sc. in El. Engineering from the U. of M. in 1951, and has for the last two years been with E. G. Eggerston Inc., Consulting and Design Engineers of Winnipeg.

Being one of the very enthusiastic and active members of the Icelandic

Canadian Club and Club Treasurer, at the time he left, it was a great loss to the club when Jon Myrdal left Winnipeg. But like so many of our other members, who have left the city to undertake responsible positions in various parts of this country, Jon will continue to be a member and support the ideals and activities of the Icelandic Canadian Club.

Jon was also chairman of the I. C. C. banquet and dance committee, but had to leave just two days prior to the banquet. But his thoughts were with the club on that day and he sent a telegram of good wishes which was read at the banquet.

His position as treasurer was taken over by another able member, H. V. Larusson.

## Consolation

by Olafur Erlendson

Dear, if I never see your face again,  
The whole world breaths alone for you;  
In azure skies  
Your dreamy eyes  
Are always smiling through the blue.  
The sunlight fair  
is golden hair  
Your silken tresses spun with dew.

Dear, if I never hear your voice again,  
If I must only wait and long  
In all my dreams,  
The silver streams  
are rippling echoes of your song,  
And night or day  
along my way  
The woods your laughter sweet, pro-  
long.

Dear, if I never kiss your lips again,  
In every rose of ruby hue  
Your lips divine  
I press to mine  
Ah, no sweetheart, it is not true,  
That we can live  
Apart, forgive —  
I love, I breath, I live for you.

## Hughreysting

eftir Ólaf Erlendson

Translated from the English by Sig. Júl.

Jóhannesson

Þó frammar sjáumst aldrei, elskan mín  
eg aðeins lifi vegna þín;  
sem loftin blá  
og björt og há  
þitt brosmilt, draumrænt auga skín;  
sem heiðgeislinn  
er haddur þinn,  
sem hreintært silki lökkurinn.

Þó söng þinn heyri eg aldrei, elskan  
mín  
en aðeins þrái hljóðin þín,  
í ljúfum draum  
við lækja straum  
mér lánar fossinn bergmál sín.  
Það létta finn  
eg lífsveg minn  
að lög þín syngur skógurinn.

Þó frammar kyssumst aldrei, elskan mín,  
í anda finst mér vörin þín  
við himneskt ljós  
sem rauðleit rós. —  
Nei, rangt er þetta, elskan mín,  
því án þín líf  
er ekkert líf;  
eg elska — lifi — vegna þín.

### ÓLAFUR ERLENDSON

Bruce Hutchison writer and journalist has written a book with the title "The Unknown Country". He claims the Canadian people do not know their own country nor their own nation; and he proves it.

Some one might write another book entitled: "The Unknown Generation".

We, the Icelanders in North America, do not know our young Icelandic generation. It is gradually coming to light, that among our young people, who are scattered all over this Continent, there are here and there young men and young women endowed with abundant literary ability. But naturally they all use the English language.

Until *The Icelandic Canadian* started, these people had no outlet for their work among the Icelanders. Consequently they were practically unknown—some of them at least. But since the appearance of this magazine, several poets and writers have appeared there, who were not known before.

One of these unknown Icelandic poets is the author of this poem. It is evident that it is not the first one nor the only one composed by the author. It may be the only one of the first one to appear in print.

The author was the son of Jóhann Erlendson and his wife Sigurbjörg Gudlaugdóttir of

# The Family of Icelandic Canadians

Address delivered at the Icelandic Canadian Club annual concert Feb. 24.

by Rev. H. S. Sigmar

It is not easy to say what an Icelandic Canadian really is. He is most difficult to classify. There are some in that group who have a deep, almost patriotic, love in their hearts for Iceland, even though they may not have stepped on its soil; while there are many who have no sense of special loyalty to this land of their birth or of their forebears. There are some who speak the language of their forefathers beautifully and even write poetry in that tongue, while many others fail to understand the language and see no good reason why they should attempt to learn it. There are some Canadians of Icelandic extraction who have a deep yearning to preserve and perpetuate the best things out of their cultural background; others are impatient for the day when there is no consciousness of national background in Canada, and view all efforts to preserve such awareness as a detriment to the wholesome development of Canadianism, in addition to a diversity of clear cut convictions on these and other issue among people of Icelandic background, there are shades in variation of opinion for almost every individual who springs from this source of traditional individualism.

I do not propose to be a judge as to which attitude is right and which is wrong. Nor is it my intention this

evening to impose my personal opinions upon this audience. I do, however, wish to speak about the one factor that almost all Icelandic Canadians or Americans have in common. It is a kindred spirit that exists among people of this national origin— an almost inescapable sense of fraternity, which pursues even the man who vigorously attempts to deny his bonds of background and of blood.

It is seen in the homesick boy in a strange city, searching for an Icelandic name in the telephone directory. He doesn't know the least thing about the famed literature of the country of his grandparents; he has little more than idle curiosity regarding that island of frost and fire; but inexplicably he dials that phone number, and loneliness departs as he finds a "frændi" in a city far from home. It is seen in the man or woman of Icelandic parentage reading through a newspaper, who pauses with deep feeling at the Icelandic name in the obituary columns. He knows nothing of that individual's life or family connections, except the fact that this was a fellow Icelandic Canadian, and there is a special tug at the heart, even as there is a glow of pleasure at reading of the success of another person bearing an Icelandic name. My wife and I experienced this feeling of kinship with the Icelander

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Akra, N. D. He was one of the very best singers in the community and evidently would have become a very good poet in favourable circumstances, but his health was poor and he died from a heart ailment and other complications at the age of 34 years. His brother, J. J. Erlendson, of the Erlendson Insurance Agency, resides in Cavalier, North Dakota.

It is to be hoped that **The Icelandic Canadian** keeps on unearthing unusual talents and thus continue to make unknown authors known. —S. S. J.

in a rather dramatic fashion. We were living in Philadelphia at the time and thought there were no other people of Icelandic blood in that vast city. One day there was a picture of six young men in the daily paper, with this caption in headlines: "Icelanders Shiver in Philadelphia". The paper revealed that these were students of pharmacy at the University of Pennsylvania—six young men from Iceland, who were finding the winter colder there than in their homeland. We knew nothing more except that there were six other Icelanders in this city of 2 millions, and I assure you we lost no time in contacting them. That same night they were not only our guests, but our friends—and in a sense, new found members of our family.

That, I believe, illustrates my topic this evening. The Icelandic ethnic group is not simply a nationality, it is a clan. Really it is an enlarged family circle. It is interesting to observe that the Icelandic word for a kinsman, — "frændi" is etymologically related to the English word, "friend". And of course that is as it should be: the family circle should be one of friendship. Of course that doesn't mean that it always is friendly. Just as in the small family unit there are spats and fights and times of not talking to one another, so it is in the Icelandic Canadian Family. But that does not detract from the family feeling of loyalty and concern, helpfulness and sympathy. (Although while listening to the rather big decisions that were being made today at the convention of the Icelandic National League, where there was no fighting or feuding, I asked myself, "Where has the fighting spirit of the Icelandic disappeared?" Today an attitude of co-operation in the Icelandic family is replacing that of division.)

The Icelandic Canadian Club is another evidence of this family sense among people of our common background. These people have gathered together to engage in their fellowship and in their projects, not because they felt it their duty so to do, but because their Icelandic Canadian Family love brought them together. Their magazine, as well as the Icelandic publications of other agencies have served to keep this widely dispersed family group in touch with one another. The newly organized Leif Eiriksson Society of Young People is still another evidence of the fact that the highest common denominator in the Icelandic Canadian Ethnic Group is this sense of family relationship, which seeks inevitably some form of fellowship.

We are met here tonight in some what of a family reunion. Any family group with roots far in the past possesses some heirlooms, and will find pleasure and inspiration in contemplating its family treasures. In fact, by failing to look into our family heirlooms, we are in danger of overlooking some "pearl of great price", even as the young man who knew that he was heir to all that his aunt owned. He waited patiently for her to pass away. But she hung tenaciously to life, until he had almost become an old man himself. Expecting to be an heir, he had not prepared himself for a vocation, nor had he spent time in working. So his life had been wasted, even as most of his aunt's fortune had been dissipated through her long illness. When the estate was fully settled, all he had left was a family heirloom—an old fashioned Bible, heavily bound and with a lock and key. He was so disgusted and disappointed that he wasted the rest of his life and lived the life of a vagrant.



Although he had never bothered to look into the Bible which had been left to him, he, somehow, kept it with him wherever he travelled. And one evening as he lay dying, alone in a dingy room, he saw the Bible and thought it might be well for him to read a few verses before he died. As he opened it for the first time he found within its pages over six thousand dollars in currency and much more in notes and securities. He died realizing that he had wasted his fortune because he failed to look into his heirloom.

This evening I would like to examine with you briefly three of our Icelandic Family heirlooms which are well known and which have frequently been referred to in public addresses.

I would first mention the Icelandic Language which is both a classical and a living language. It is strong in character and highly expressive. It lends itself to the writing of amazing poetry, such as the type that can be read from beginning to end or from the end to the beginning with identical meaning. Partly due to the care with which it has been used, and partly due to the circumstances by which it has suffered very little change in form, its vocabulary is very exact and is not easily misunderstood. I would like to offer one example of how the Icelandic language has remained constant, while the English language has been in a state of flux. The Icelandic phrase, "sæl kona", has always meant, and still means, "blessed woman". The English word "silly" originally meant blessed: then happy; later, gay; still later, frivolous and finally it acquired the present connotation of the word "silly". This is not said to belittle the English language, which has many qualities of its own that are superior

to any other language: the facility with which it travels all over the world; the ease with which it adopts foreign words and phrases; its quality of elasticity and adaptability to new situations. The comparison is made so that we may be more aware of the peculiar treasure of the language of our forefathers which always says what it means, and means what it says with constant reliability and with the development being not in the form of radical departure of denotation, but in the enrichment of connotation of meaning.

Closely related to the language, I would call your attention to another of our priceless family jewels: the Literature of Iceland. I shall not speak of the classic sagas and eddas, for I have no intimate personal knowledge of them and can therefore not speak with personal conviction, although we have been assured by the greatest of authorities that this literature is unsurpassed in quality. I do wish to say a word for Icelandic Hymnody. I have studied hymns in several languages, particularly Icelandic and English. And in this field of literature, I speak from my heart when I say we have a treasure that is utterly magnificent. He who has not read the hymns of Valdimar Briem and Matthias Jochumsson has dealt lightly with his birthright. And, of course, the Passion Hymns of Hallgrímur Pétursson, are utterly unique, and a world renowned contribution of Iceland to the literature of Christendom. When we who are heirs to such high literary treasures do not rise beyond the Comic Book level of reading, regardless of what language we employ, then we have truly sold our birthright for a mess of pottage.

I would like to say a great deal

about the third family treasure which we are now about to examine. But I only have time to sketch crudely with a few strokes of the brush. There is, however, no part of our inheritance which is as precious as the strong moral character and the Christian faith of our forefathers. We see it so clearly in the lives of our Pioneer grandparents or parents. And may I try to illustrate by pointing to but one facet on the jewel of their character: they were true to their word. A man was as good as his word, for his word was sacred. And how refreshing it is to look at that quality in a day and a generation when a man's word has come to mean very little or nothing at all.

By asking you to glance at a few of our common bounties from history, I do not mean to suggest that we should live in the glory of the past. This practice, which has been altogether too general in our national family life, is dangerous and disastrous. Along with that has been the flag waving and the applause for past accomplishment, and even to some extent an Occidental form of ancestral worship, and a great deal of talk about our love for things Icelandic that has been very shallow indeed: bragging about our literature, but never opening a book; identifying ourselves with the poets and sages, without even studying a poem; basking in the glory of their faith, without lifting a finger to emulate their lives. All this business of talking big and doing little—"Heap big smoke; no fire"—is like the conclusion of a love letter that went something like this:

"My love for you is so great I would scale the highest mountains, brave the deepest snows and wildest storms. My love is so deep, I would face the

fiercest beasts or go through fire for you.

Your best beloved,

P.S. I'll see you Saturday night if it doesn't rain."

I must conclude this address. And as I do so I might observe that the bond of brotherhood that is almost universally found among people of Icelandic parentage is due to the experiences, the history, the friends, the inheritance and the tastes we have in common. And there is, too, the mystery about the tie of blood relationship that can neither be fully explained or explained away. Whatever the reasons may be—perhaps it is largely because we are an exceptionally small group in numbers—whether or not the reasons may be logically or morally justified, whether it is desirable or not that this tribal bond exist among us, is not the question, for it is something that simply exists and some people would glory in it, while others deplore it. The important question for us to answer is this: "What can we do with this trait that will contribute constructively toward our Canadian and World citizenship?"

We shall help to give the coming generations of Canada and of all the Earth a Treasure from our own day, as we demonstrate through our organizations and by our individual lives that we can be part of a clan, without being clannish; that we can appreciate our own origin without depreciating that of any other; that we can be grateful for a good heredity without thinking ourselves better than others. And if we have good fellowship with our own racial kith and kin, in such a spirit of friendliness and openmindedness toward all others, some small coals of brotherliness may keep glow-

ing in this cold, cold world. And perhaps, some day, mankind will awaken from its nightmare of division and dis-sension to discover the Christian truth that we are all of the same blood, all kindred, all peoples. May the Icelandic

Canadian family hearth, along with other circles of kinship, help to ignite a flame of world brotherhood upon the altar of Him Who created us that we might all one day be a family of nations.

## Thorlakson Grand-Children Graduate



**Ensign Robert Edward Jobin**, son of Bessie (Thorlakson) and the late Fred Jobin, received his B.Sc. degree from the University of Wisconsin last June. He is now in the legal office on the U.S.S. Oriskany in the Pacific. He attended the U. of W. on an NROTC (Navy Reserve Officers Training Corps) Scholarship.

An older brother, **Dan Jobin**, received his B.Sc. degree from the U. of Michigan in 1948. While working on his Master's Degree, he taught a geology class at the university on a Fellowship. He is at present in charge of a government sponsored project, a National Geographic Survey in Colorado.

**Miss Patricia Mooney**, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. E. G. Mooney of Detroit, was awarded a journalism certificate

and a Phi Beta Kappa commendation upon her graduation (Magna-Cum-Laude) from Cooley High School, last June. She is continuing her studies at the U. of Michigan.

These three young persons are among the grandchildren of Thorsteinn and Hlaðgerður (Laxdal) Thorlakson (See Icel. Can., Autumn '51, p. 37) many of whom have been outstanding in their studies, and have overcome difficulties in securing an education. It is a large family, there being eleven of the grandchildren in Detroit. Patricia Monney's mother is Lillian (Thorlakson) Mooney.

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### AWARDED KNIGHT CROSS

**Mrs. Holmfridur Petursson**, widow of Dr. Rögnvaldur Petursson, (See Icel. Can. Winter '52) has been honored by Iceland for her participation in her husband's work, and other community activities. She was presented with the Knight Cross of the Order of the Falcon.



### WINS BURSARY

**Norman Gisli Arnason** last year won the Dominion-Provincial Student bursary of \$300.00, and is now studying engineering at the University of B. C. He is the son of Stefan and Sigurbjorg (Einarsdóttir) Arnason, formerly of Piney, Man., now living in Vancouver.

## Thingvalla Pioneer's Story

by S. B. OLSON

(Continued from Winter Issue)

During the preceeding summer my father got leave of about 2 weeks from his work at the mill which he spent in building a shelter on our homestead. With the help of another settler he took out logs on our own land, hewed them and built the walls for a log house to the height of about eight feet and a size of about 16 by 20 feet, leaving the roof and floor to be done later. He had also managed to put up a supply of hay for the cows.

But news came to us in the latter part of the summer while we were still in Millwood, that a prairie fire had razed a considerable area, including part of our homestead and our prospective home had been burned to the ground.

Father had then received permission to use temporarily a small hut which had also been built during the summer by our future neighbor, Jón Magnússon. This was built of black poplar logs, with sod roof, and plastered with clay. It was 14 by 14 in size, about seven feet high, had one small window and there was a cast-iron stove in one corner. To this rather cheerless accommodation we arrived on this cold, blustery pitch dark evening.

So here we were, two families, counting nine people huddled in this little house, tired, cold and hungry, with no chairs, no table and no bed, and only the little four-lid cook stove to keep us warm.

However, a good fire was soon burning in the stove, and this worked wonders in cheering everyone. A wide board nailed to the wall served as a

table, a few small boxes to sit on, and a good hot meal, all served to minimize the gloomy aspect of our condition.

When it came time to go to rest, the boxes were put outside, and our bedding spread on the sod floor where we all slept the sleep of exhaustion after a long day's travelling against a bitterly cold wind.

Everyone was up bright and early next morning, eager to view the new surroundings.

It was a lovely sunshiny morning and much warmer.

After breakfast, father and Helgi shouldered picks and shovels and set out for the spot on our homestead where our home was to be, just a half mile away from Jon's log cabin.

A partnership was formed, where it was agreed that the two families would live together through the coming winter, and share in making a habitable place to live in, in the short time before winter set in.

The material on hand consisted of the lumber from the house we lived in, in Millwood, which had been torn down, plus some odds and ends bought cheaply from the mill. This however, was not sufficient to build a structure that would resist or give protection against the rigors of severe winter weather. It was therefore decided to make an excavation on the south side of a hill, large enough to live in, and use the lumber to line the walls and for a floor.

When this was completed, it was roofed with poles and sod.



The walls were about 7 feet high, the front end standing full height, clear of the excavation, the other end being level with the top of the hill.

All this was accomplished in record time, and no time was lost in moving the two families.

Our cook stove was set up in a corner in the front end, and used by both families. The water for cooking and washing had to be brought in buckets from a little lake, three-quarters of a mile distant. Carrying the water fell to the lot of my sister and myself.

Our dugout home was warm but very crowded. We were sheltered from the raw east wind by a fairly heavy poplar bluff, and the fierce northern blizzards did not affect us, as only the roof showed on a level with the hill.

News came that the railway had reached a spot 7 miles from our homestead. A small village had sprung up that was named Langenburg, and it served a settlement of newcomers, Germans. One of the two general stores in the village was owned and operated by two Germans, Hinch and Ulrich, the other was owned by Helgi Jonson. It having been moved to Langenburg from Shellmouth and was managed by Bjarni (Davidson) Westman.

Most of the few settlers already in the settlement procured their provisions in this new town, it being closest. A few travelled to Shellmouth to buy their groceries, a distance of 15 miles.

Late in the fall of 1886 father applied for and was granted a loan of some \$200.00 from the Canada Settlers' Loan and Trust Co.

With this money he bought a team of oxen, a wagon and box, a set of sleighs, a breaker plow, and a set of harrows.

Our team of oxen, called Lamb and Lion, were powerful animals and easy to handle, except if travelling away from home, and they found a chance to turn to go back home again, they would get out of control and run like deer, and could not be stopped or turned right or left until they reached the yard at home.

That first winter, this team of oxen proved the only means of subsistence for both families. There being no work to be had, and little or no money, they hauled dry firewood to Langenburg that sold for \$2.50 a load, for which the bare necessities were purchased. The only meat was bush rabbits, of which there were plenty, and of course the milk and butter from our cows was an important part of our diet. There were no luxuries, unless a cup of coffee can be put in that class.

Father and Helgi took a load of wood to town alternately and the proceeds were used to buy the bare necessities, such as coffee, sugar, a little flour and shorts to mix with the flour for bread, also milled oats for porridge.

Often we would run short of something, and would do without until the next trip was made to town. When coffee was served, my sister Gudny and I were allowed a cup of weaker coffee also a small lump of sugar each.

We often watched mother as she prepared meals, and could not fail to notice the care and worry that showed, when everything had to be used so sparingly.

My sister and I took a notion one day, that we would save our lump of sugar and surprise mother by producing our little hoard, when her supply ran out. This we did, and instead of

using it, we deposited each lump in a little tin that was hidden away and kept secret. Then it happened! Some time later, we heard mother mention that the supply had run out, we proudly produced our hidden hoard, and were rewarded with a very surprised look, a loving smile and two big tears. That moment has lingered in my memory all my life.

Thus the winter passed, and a cold winter it was, that winter of 1886-7. Many a report like the sound of a cannon, would be heard in the woods nearby, on a clear night, when the severe frost tightened its grip everywhere.

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This tract of land that I have mentioned, gave great promise of abundance and a bright future. It was well watered with small lakes here and there, plenty of hay meadows, and pasture land, a good supply of building logs and fuel.

Not many settlers had arrived in the district thus far, and these with a few exceptions, had been employed by the railway and had entered for homesteads in late summer and moved in when freeze-up came, and work was suspended. The following summer saw the largest number of new arrivals also a lesser number, the summer of 1888.

The various groups of settlers arriving during the summer of 1887 came mostly direct from Iceland. A few were from Winnipeg.

As the end of steel was still at Langenburg, these people were met there, and they and their effects were transported via the oxen-wagon route to the homes of kind hearted, hospitable countrymen or relations. Our

oxen, often with myself as driver, had a goodly share in these operations. Also in the matter of getting logs from the woods for buildings.

While the business of house-building went on, some of the families had to live in cramped quarters in shared accommodation with their hosts. As an illustration of this condition for several weeks that summer, our house sheltered 3 families besides our own. Our home now being a two-storey log-house, quite roomy. But no one grumbled, and in a surprisingly short time these people moved into their own houses on their own homesteads.

Soon the railway was pushed on further into the North-West, and when it reached the settlement on the southern fringe, a small town came into being, and was called Church-bridge. This was in winter of 1887-88. The town grew, and very soon there were two general stores, a post office, a section house, blacksmith shop, a boarding house, and dwellings. One of the general stores was owned by the widow of Helgi Jonson, the colonization agent who had passed away some months previously. This store was managed by Bjarni (Davidson) Westman, who later married the widow.

The other general store was owned and managed by Johann G. Thorgeirson who came from Winnipeg and started the business that was quickly patronized by the major part of the settlement. "Joe" was liked and respected by most people, both as a citizen and a businessman. He had a pleasing personality, and was always courteous and obliging.

In the winter of 1888-89 the Thingvalla School was built. It was a log building, shingle roofed and was built by volunteer labor.

The first teacher was Miss Gudny (Jonsdottir) Jones, (later Mrs. Magnus Paulson of Winnipeg). She was a fine person and a very capable and conscientious teacher.

Ours was a six-months' summer school, and Miss Jones taught there for three summers, and as one of her pupils I feel convinced that her work conduct, and moral influence, made a deep and lasting impression on the minds of all pupils.

My sister Gudny, taught at the Thingvalla School during the 1893 term and after school was closed that fall she went to Winnipeg and married Th. (Þórður) Johnson, who for many years had a jewelry and watch-maker business on Main St. Thordur was one of a large family often referred to as "Hjarðarfells", as they came from Hjarðarfélli in Iceland. Alec Johnson, the well-known singer, who recently passed away was the youngest brother.

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The settlement progressed; better houses were built; some land was broken and brought under cultivation, the little herds of cattle grew; the Thingvalla Post Office was established; and with money earned in rail-road work, people lived under easier circumstances.

It was a thoroughly Icelandic settlement. All books and reading matter had been brought from the old country. These were to a large extent, the old Icelandic Sagas, also "Rímur", books of poetry, Sunday sermons (by Jón Víðalín), the Passion hymns, and many others.

Icelandic was spoken everywhere. As there was no meeting place and no minister there were no religious services conducted in the community at

first. But on Sundays most families had some member of the family read the printed sermons from Bishop Jón Víðalín's Book, and sang one or more of the Icelandic hymns. And in the winter evenings the Passion Hymns were sung, all the family taking part.

There was a strong feeling of friendliness, and a spirit of neighborliness prevailed all through the length and breadth of the settlement.

The settlers all knew each other, and neighbor helped neighbor, turn about, as the occasion arose.

The first minister to visit the settlement was the late Rev. Jón Bjarnason of Winnipeg. Our Lutheran congregation had already been formed, and it was due to the invitation of the committee that he made the visit.

During his stay, beside preaching he performed such ceremonies as marriages and baptisms. On one notable occasion there were seven couples married at one time in the presence of a large gathering.

In the process of building up, and creating community life, various undertakings were successfully accomplished.

A large community hall, centrally located, was built, that filled the need for social gatherings, public meetings and also church services.

The Railroad continued on past the settlement, the next station west was named Bredenbury. Then Saltcoats and finally Yorkton, which was the end of steel for some time.

The surrounding territory became settled to a certain extent and Post offices were established among them being Berisena, Rothbury, Logberg. My father was the first mail carrier to

(Continued on Page 43)

## Hall of Fame for Mrs. Carter

Mrs. Kate B. Carter was one of seven women in Salt Lake City, named in January to the Salt Lake Council of Women's "Hall of Fame" for their outstanding civic and community service over a period of years. Selections to the Hall of Fame are made every



**Mrs. Kate B. Carter**

five years by the presidents of 76 participating civic clubs in the council.

The seven civic leaders were special guests at a banquet held at Hotel Utah February 26, where the highlight of the evening was the presentation of the awards to each of the women for their contribution to the community and state.

Mrs. Carter has been president of the DUP (Daughters of Utah Pioneers) for the past eleven years and at one

time was vice-president of the State central company, DUP. She has collected and compiled 12 volumes of Utah pioneer history, called "Heart Throbs of the West". These volumes contain excellent source material on Utah history and are easy to use because of the arrangement of the material, sections being classified as: Pioneer Music, Pioneer Theatricals; Pioneer Silk Industry; and so on.

Mrs. Carter has now started a new series entitled: "Treasures of Pioneer History". The first volume is off the press and is 511 pages. The first chapters in this new series are "The Utah Central Railroad and other Railroads", and "The Old Prospector".

Among the outstanding work of the DUP, and of Mrs. Carter as their leader and president, has been the preservation of historic landmarks and the placing of markers. Mrs. Carter has written inscriptions for, and helped to place 124 historical markers, among them being the marker to commemorate the first settlement of Icelanders in America (see Icel. Canadian, Summer, 1947).

In addition Mrs. Carter has throughout the years served on innumerable organizations, civic service, patriotic and cultural. Her patriotic services include: Committee-women in Red Cross Work, during First World War; in 1945 she was appointed by Gov. Herbert B. Maw to the State Division of War Salvage Board where she organized groups of DUP's which were actively engaged in salvage work. As Utah Minute Women, she has participated in many war programs and has received a citation for "Patriotic Service" in such work. In June 1945 she



received recognition from Bushnell Hospital for "outstanding service", and received a citation from the War Production Board in 1942-43. She has been named to the Civil Defence Board by Gov. J. Bracken Lee.

Twenty-five years ago Mrs. Carter wrote the story of the State Flag of Utah, and her version of it has been accepted. Thousands of these pamphlets have been distributed throughout the world.

As is so often the case with outstanding work, unselfishly done, Mrs. Carter's historical compiling began on a small scale 23 years ago, when she started to prepare historic outlines for DUP regular meetings. These she took the trouble to mimeograph, so that members could have full use of their perusal. In 1934 the printing of these lessons began, and the work has since pyramided into the voluminous collection of "Heart Throbs of the West", 12 books. For all this work and the newly started series, Mrs. Carter has

not received one cent in salary or Royalties.

In these times when we are erroneously led to believe that our "culture" and our "education" are entirely dependent on how much money can be extracted from the citizens, to be funnelled out in vague and elaborate projects, it is refreshing to read about such work as Mrs. Carter's and her associates. It should be an inspiration for those who are still making individual efforts and sacrifices in these fields, and it should hearten them in maintaining the spiritual fortitude of the pioneers, especially perhaps the pioneers of Icelandic stock, who did not wait for "culture" to be enforced from the top down, but knew that it was something fundamental and precious, which had to be evolved out of the hearts and minds of the people themselves, yes, and out of their own vigilant and persevering individual contributions.

H. D.

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## Bjarnason Sisters Graduate

Miss Frida Bjarnason graduated from the U. of B. C. with a B.A. degree and later took a graduate course as Lab-Technician at General Hospital, B. C.

Miss Thelma Bjarnason graduated with an R.N. degree from St. Paul's School of Nursing in Vancouver, B.C.

Miss Christine Bjarnason, a graduate from St. Paul's School of Nursing, 1951, has also taken a post graduate course in Surgery.

These three sisters are daughters of Otto and Margret Bjarnason of Vancouver, formerly of Wynyard, Sask.

Their maternal grandparents are Hjörtur Fridrikson Bjarnason, and his wife, Guðrún Steinólfsdóttir Grímsón (See article on Thordarson Reunion, Icel. Can., Autumn, 1951 and A Country Squire in N. Dak., Spring issue, 1952). They came from N. Dak. to Wynyard in 1909 and now live at Dawson Creek, B. C.

Otto Bjarnason's parents were Magnús and Rosa Sæunn (Sveinsdóttir) Bjarnason who came to Wynyard from Lundar, Man.

# THULE

by Halldor J. Stefansson

"Go West, young man!" was the sound advice freely given out a few decades ago; and thousands with stars in their eyes and red blood in their veins heeded the call, and so built new empires on both sides of the 49th parallel. Now Horace Greeley's advice might well be changed to "Go North . . . ."

In northern Canada vast developments have taken place or are under way; but an even more spectacular change has come over Thule, in north west Greenland. A young workman accepted for service there may not find a gold mine; but he will get an income of \$12,000—18,000 annually, which in a year or two should enable him to come back to claim his lady-love and settle down in their dream cottage far from the rigors of the North.

The construction of the airbase at Thule (long known only as Operation Blue Jay) is a colossal example of modern engineering genius. Here on the frozen tundra, some 900 miles from the North Pole (1700 miles closer than Winnipeg) and only a dozen miles from Greenland's two-mile high eternal ice-cap, the Americans built, in 18 months, a base with 8 airstrips up to 2 miles long, a town for 5,000 people, and 6 hangars large enough to house the world's largest airliners or atom-bombers, as the case may be. This gigantic task has been accomplished by the labor of some 20,000 men, at a cost of about \$263,000,000 (by comparison, the Panama Canal cost \$100,000,000.)

It was back in 1927, shortly after

Lindberg flew the Atlantic, that the late Knud Rasmussen, Danish explorer, and Bernt Balchen, famed Arctic flier and former Manitoba bush-pilot, met in New York one evening. The talk turned, naturally, to air exploits, and Balchen prophesied that the Arctic would one day have air bases. His friend suggested that a good one could be made at Thule, where he had spent some time with his Eskimo friends. The idea was not forgotten. During the late war, Balchen, now a colonel in the American Air Force, was mainly responsible for development of the Americans' modest deep-freeze airbase at Thule as a stepping stone on the air-route to the European battlefield.

When it became known recently that Russia was building major air bases on her far northern islands known as Franz Josef Land, Balchen sold to the then American Air Secretary the idea of creating a super-base in northern Greenland, from which interceptor planes could fan out over the trans-polar air route between Russia and America. This would be our first line of defence in case of war, and also a springboard for retaliatory attacks, only five hours by jet bombers from the heart of the Soviet empire. This can be of inestimable value to us all should the need arise.

Under the Nato mutual security agreement the permission and co-operation of the Danish government was secured, and so in March, 1951, an advance force of 600 men was airborne to Thule. Three months later these were reinforced by sea by 7½ thousand

carefully selected military and civilian personnel along with much heavy equipment. There was, beside, a continuous airlift from a field in Massachusetts 2,732 miles away. In all, there were over 2,100 round trips made by cargo planes carrying a total of 25 million pounds of equipment and supplies. As many as 10 or 12 planes landed and unloaded daily, and then went back for more.

The American army engineers are not unused to tough assignments, but here was one of their hardest. First they had to build, at the mouth of a fjord, an harbor capable of accommodating 11,000 ton ships, with unloading facilities. Working against great odds they unloaded a daily average of 3,386 tons for 44 days. Roadways and runways had to be gauged 6 feet deep into the hard frost and then filled with crushed stone and concrete manufactured at the nearby mountains by heavy machinery disembarked and moved into place with great difficulty. Finally the whole thing was compacted by 100-ton packers. On Sept. 11th, 1951, the first plane roared off the first runway, only 6 months after the advance party descended out of the eerie Arctic twilight.

Building construction was another poser. For the men they erected insulated aluminium huts, futuristically designed like "inside-out refrigerators". Erecting these on the surface was easy, but having them stay put was another matter. About 4 feet down, the builders encountered permafrost, the permanently frozen ground congealed to rocklike hardness by eons of primeval cold. Ordinary buildings had to be erected on wooden stilts lest the heat of the building melt the perma-

frost and so sink the structure. Then the building had to be anchored with concrete weights, lest it be blown away by the hurricane winds of the region. The heavy hangars and machine shops could not be put on stilts, so they had to rest on pilings sunk deep into the permafrost; and then the ground underneath them had to be insulated by thousands of feet of piping that let in the icy cold of winter but were closed against the warmer air of summer.

When the ships had to depart that first September, they left behind a forlorn 400, to man the base and carry on operations through the long sunless winter. Everything possible was done to ease their rugged life, including such things as movies, billiard halls, a complete gymnasium, musical instruments and lessons for all who cared. Guffey's Tavern supplied beer and the usual "guff" heard there. Food of the best quality was liberally served in cheerful dining halls. But in the outside darkness winds in that region blow up to 150 miles an hour, so the workers had to hold onto cables rigged between the buildings lest they be blown across the wastes. In temperatures dipping down to 60° below, men can work only an hour or two at a time. Steel and rubber become brittle and equipment breakdowns were frequent. Motor trucks and other machinery were kept running continuously lest they refuse to start again until next summer. Under such conditions it is felt that the men at Thule deserve a thousand dollars a month, and up.

While the main drive behind Operation Blue Jay was the urgent needs of defence, the Thule airport may be of very great peacetime value to the world. Last November two experiment-

al flights from the U.S. west coast to Copenhagen via Edmonton and Thule were made by big airliners of the Scandinavian Airlines System. Said one of their executives, "If all goes well, we hope it will be a regular passenger trip by the end of 1953". This route "will shorten travel distance by 2,000 miles."

On the first of these experimental flights one interested passenger was none other than Col Bernt Balchen. The Polar Basin, he told newsmen, has become "the centre of the civilized world in to-day's airage". Another passenger, John Redding, U.S. Assistant Postmaster-General, predicted that Thule will become "one of the most

important crossroads of the air age."

So any day now, Westerners traveling the airplanes to Europe may expect to stop off once after leaving Edmonton, in a compact little modern town of 5,000 people under the northern lights. They may rest at an ultra-modern hotel heated by electricity and served with running hot and cold water from the largest salt water distillery in the world. They may even send home a message to announce their well-being from the world's highest radio tower—only about 20 yards lower than the Empire State Building. And all this at the new Thule, some 700 miles farther north than Iceland—the Ultima Thule of the Romans!

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## Gunnsteinn Eyjólfsson's Stories Reprinted

Gunnsteinn Eyjólfsson, who came to New Iceland with his parents in 1876, at the age of ten years, was the first of the Icelandic pioneers in this country to write stories, and some of them were published as early as 1894. "Amerísk gestrisni" (American Hospitality) was published in Sögusafn Þjóðólfs, in 1894. His best known stories perhaps, are the three about "Jón Á Strympu", which relate with satirical humour, the public-service efforts of an ineffectual and rather simple-minded New Iceland farmer.

Gunnsteinn was only twenty-eight years old when he finished his novellette, "Elenóra", and he died in 1910 at the age of forty-four. His death at this early age was a great loss to the Icelandic community, for he was endowed with artistic and imaginative talents, not only as a writer, but in other creative fields. In spite of the fact that in those days of early pioneering in New Iceland, there was no opportunity to develop these tal-

ents, except through diligent personal application, his creative ability found expression, not only in writing but in composing music.

The life and artistic career of Gunnsteinn Eyjólfsson will be featured in the summer issue of **The Icelandic Canadian**.

His collected stories, including Elenóra, Jón Á Strympu, and six other stories were published last year by his daughter, Vilborg Eyjólfsson, who is a member and former treasurer of the Icelandic Canadian Club. All those who can read Icelandic will be interested in getting this book and will be grateful to his daughter, who in this way has not only honored the memory of her father, but thus has preserved for posterity these first literary efforts of the Icelandic pioneers here.

The book, titled "Jón á Strympu og fleiri sögur" is a paper bound edition of 230 pages and sells for \$3.50. It may be obtained from Björnson's Book Store, 702 Sargent Ave., Wpg.



*In The Sierra Nevadas\**

By JÓN ÓLAFSSON

Over fen, over fell  
 Snowy crowned, over dell  
 Through the rich greening forests huge timbered,  
 O'er abyss profound,  
 Piercing crag, over mound  
 I hurtle like arrow unlimbered.

:-    :-    :-    :-

Of these mighty things told,  
 And much else to behold,  
 At which most should one marvel, — — the Power  
 That reared mountains so steep,  
 Graved the riverbeds deep  
 And then hid in the heart of a flower;

That enriches dark mould  
 With fertility's gold,  
 Plumes the glistening peak of the mountain,  
 Rives earth's bosom amain,  
 Cleaves tall ranges in twain, —  
 Silverlaces the fell like a fountain;

Or, — — —the heart and the hand  
 That clears forests off land,  
 That has levelled smooth sheer cliff and chasm;  
 That with toil and with skill  
 Drives his road through the hill  
 And then bridges the wild torrent's spasm?

:-    :-    :-    :-

Kneel you down, man of mould!  
 Curb this flesh over-bold,  
 All your pride is but storm twisted vapour,  
 Behold wond'ringly, wight,  
 God's eternal almight  
 Sense how feeble and futile your caper.

\*This is the reaction of a 26-year old young poet from Iceland, seeing the Sierras for the first time, and riding on the first transcontinental railroad, which had been completed only four years previously (1870). He, himself, had only recently become acquainted with railroads for the first time.

## Utah Collects Icelandic Genealogical Records

Between the years 1855-1860, sixteen Icelandic settlers established the first permanent Icelandic settlement in America at Spanish Forks, Utah. Other migrations, totalling some seventy to eighty families, from Iceland to East Bench of Spanish Fork, the site of the first settlement, took place during the years 1872-1892. Most of these settlers became adherents of the Mormon faith (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints). Some of them became active leaders in their church organization, and influential in various communal activities. Their descendants of the second and third generation have followed the footsteps of the original settlers and have risen to prominence in religious, educational, industrial, and political activities in the State of Utah. While Icelandic as a spoken language has almost completely disappeared with the second generation of these settlers, many of the third generation are still keenly interested in their Icelandic heritage, and the literature, culture and genealogy of their forefathers. Periodically, festive days have recalled the events of the early settlers. Icelandic Day celebrations on August 2nd have been held every year. In 1938 the Daughters of Utah Pioneers "Mt. Flonette Camp" and "The Icelandic Association" unveiled a monumental column dedicated to the sixteen original Icelandic settlers. (See Icel. Can. Summer 1947). The most recent celebration to pay tribute to the original Icelandic settlers, and other pioneer Scandinavian settlers, was held on October 4th, 1952, to mark the hundredth anniversary of the first Scandinavian settlements in Utah.

The Genealogical Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in years past, have been compiling micro-film records pertaining to most phases of the historical development of the State, and is now reputed to have one of the world's most complete historical and genealogical records of its early settlers. One phase of this, which pertains to the genealogy of the Icelandic settlers, is of particular interest to us.

Recently the Icelandic government gave permission to the Genealogical Society of Utah to micro-film many of the original record books in the possession of the Icelandic National Archives and the National Library. This project is sponsored and paid for by the Mormon church organization in Utah. The representative of the society, Mr. Henry E. Christiansen, a genealogist of Danish descent, who arranged for this work in Iceland, has estimated that the project will cost its sponsors approximately \$100,000.00. It will involve photographing some 770,000 pages of records on five or six hundred spools of film, each containing one hundred feet of film. The actual work of photographing will take about three months. The spools of film are sent by air mail to Salt Lake City as soon as possible after exposure so that they may be developed without delay.

Copies of all the micro-film taken, as well as a projecting machine, will be presented to the Icelandic National Archives when the work is completed.

Among the records being micro-filmed are the original parish records of the families that migrated from Iceland to Utah. The Icelandic re-

cords, when completed, will form a separate division of the church archives where they will be catalogued for ready reference. This will enable the descendants, many of whom are interested, to obtain complete genealogical data of their families from the Genealogical Society in Salt Lake City.

In a letter from John Y. Bearson of Springville, Utah, he tells us that:

"Nearly every Latter-Day-Saint, who is active in the church, has what he calls a Book of Remembrance. These books record all his known ancestors. Some of these are elaborate forms, published by the church, that have among other things, blank spaces for pictures of deceased relatives in the order in which they lived. They have primary charts which go directly back, and then minor charts that take care of the offshoots and individual families."

In a press interview given by Mr. Henry Christiansen on his return from a ten-day visit to Iceland, in October, 1952, he says:

"Genealogical records in Iceland are in excellent condition. It is probably the only country in the world where the common people, who are pure Icelanders, can trace their ancestors back beyond the year 1,000 A.D. A real advantage is that the language is just the same as it was a thousand years ago. This language is the mother tongue of much of the Scandinavian and English languages."

Mr. Christiansen said he had observed that: 'Icelanders are a record-keeping, as well as an ancestral-loving people.'

When **The Icelandic Canadian** asked Mr. Christiansen for detailed information about this project, he answered very promptly, and following are parts of his letter together with

classified details as to the work being done in Iceland:

Dear Mrs. Danielson:

"It is a pleasure to inform you that it was my personal privilege to make this trip to Iceland in behalf of the Genealogical Society to make final arrangements for the micro-filming of the records of genealogical value which are at the National Archives and at the National Library of Iceland. In connection with this work, I am very happy to state that I have never met with a group of people who have been more cooperative and more willing to assist with this work. Everyone whom I contacted was willing, without exception, to do all that they could to make the project a success, and in addition to this, they did everything in their power to make my stay a pleasant one.

As a result of the contact which I made with the National Archives last August, we were given full permission to micro-film the following records which they had in their possession:

1. All of the parish registers from their dates of origin to the current ones in their possession. Some of these come down to as late as the year 1937. These records generally begin about the year 1785, although there are a few which begin at an earlier date. This phase of the project has already been accomplished, and the microfilm records are either here or on their way to the Genealogical Society. After they have been received, it is necessary to process them and then make copies of them—one copy for public use and one copy to be given to the National Archives of Iceland in appreciation for the privilege of filming the records.

2. All of the census records of Ice-

land from the year 1703 to the year 1901, inclusive.

3. Registers of confirmed youth from the year 1831 to the year 1951, inclusive.

4. The probate records. The dates of origin of these records vary between the year 1750 to the year 1803, depending upon the province from which they come. Permission has been granted to copy these records from their dates of origin down to the present time.

5 The mortgage records which cover approximately the same period of time as the probate records previously mentioned.

6. The 66-volume manuscript collection of biographies of learned men of Iceland, which was prepared by the noted Icelandic genealogist, Dr. Hannes Thorsteinsson. These biographies are for learned men who were living in Iceland between the years 1400-1800.

7. The provincial court records from their dates of origin down to the year 1785. The court records subsequent to this date would not likely be used very extensively by persons seeking after their genealogy because of the other contemporaneous records existing after that date. For this reason these records are not copied later than the year 1785.

8. Supreme Court records, but only for the years prior to 1800.

9. Orphans court records from their dates of origin up to recent years.

10 In addition to the records already mentioned, several manuscript records are also being made as well as compilations of genealogical value which are in print but no longer a-

vailable. These records include such compilations as biographies by Jón Espólin, genealogies of priests, and biographies of the sheriffs in Iceland, etc. Also included in this miscellaneous section are many of the original sagas which are now on file in Copenhagen, photostatic copies of which have been sent to the Archives in Reykjavik.

An agreement was made with the Archive authorities in Iceland that for the privilege of microfilming these records, they would be given a free positive copy of all the records copied. Also in appreciation for their wonderful cooperation, they are to receive a modern microfilm reader for use in their Archives. The expense of this project is carried solely by the Genealogical Society. When the records are received at the Genealogical Society and are processed, positive copies are placed on our shelves and made available to those who are interested in gathering their genealogy. Any member of the public in good moral standing is permitted the use of these records in our reading room without charge.

Realizing that the members of our public who are interested in gathering their genealogical records are, in the major part, representatives of practically all of the North European countries, it has been the objective of the Genealogical Society to carry this kind of program out in all of these European countries. As a result, we have photographers in Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Scotland, England, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Germany and have had operators in Switzerland, Norway and Italy. Our microfilm projects in Denmark are nearly completed. We have completed our work in Norway and have nearly finished the work



in Finland. All of the ancient parochial records of Scotland, from the dates of their origin down to the year 1855, Espólin, genealogies of priests, and have been copied, as well as their census records up to and including the year 1871. This indicates that our interest is equally as intense in other countries as it is in Iceland.

It is natural for us to be asked why we have such an interest in gathering these records and by so doing, form a great central Genealogical Library. The sum and substance of the whole matter is that we, by virtue of our religion, encourage our people to be interested in their forefathers. They are asked to gather a record of their lineage and by so doing to honor and revere those from whom they came. We are proud of our ancestry, even in the same manner as the Icelanders are proud of their great forebears. We believe that our greatness and any blessings which we may have in this day are the result of the efforts of those from whom we came. . . . It is our belief that all nations and all people are entitled to the same interest and if any of them should visit our Library, all are equally privileged to make use of the collection which we are striving to build.

To those who have offered us the privilege of making a copy of their records, we offer another practical aspect. In the event of future destruction, as a result of war or even as a result of the elements, it is a point of wisdom, where it is possible, to have an additional copy of their valuable records stored in such a place that both of the copies will not be destroyed at one time. This offer alone, without cost to those who are in custody of the records, should be sufficient in-

ducement for them to be willing to allow copies of their records to be made. In addition thereto, in the event of a future calamity, we have agreed to allow them to have another copy of the records at the cost of making the prints. In this day, when grave danger seems to be surrounding us from all sides, this factor of protection can hardly be overlooked as an opportunity to preserve a record of the heritage of the world. We are grateful for the privilege of dedicating some of our time to this endeavor, which we consider a noble cause.

I am grateful for your great interest in the work which we are doing, especially in Iceland. If there be any question relative to this work in which you are interested, I will be very grateful to attempt to answer it.

From the records which I have studied about the Icelandic settlements, I understand that one of their greatest colonies was the New Iceland colony which settled north of Winnipeg. We would be very much interested to know more about the history and the record of your people of the New Iceland colony. Our Library is at present a subscriber to your magazine. We are grateful for this opportunity.

I will be very happy to hear from you and to answer any questions that I can. Please accept my best regards."

Sincerely,

**Genealogical Society**

(signed) **Henry E. Christiansen**

Assistant Secretary

The Icelandic Canadian is most grateful to Mr. Christiansen for his assistance in furnishing the details of this unique and amazing project for the enjoyment of our readers.

**J. K. L.**

## *The Icelandic Club Annual Banquet and Dance*

The annual banquet and dance of the Icelandic Canadian Club was held in the Blue Room of the Marlborough Hotel, January 30, 1953. This annual event has been steadily growing in favor in the Icelandic community, and upwards of two hundred attended the banquet alone.

The banquet had a special significance this year, for on this occasion the newly formed Leif Eiríkson club made its first formal appearance before the public. The young people gave their whole hearted support and between forty and fifty were present. The officers of the two organizations, the Icelandic Canadian Club and the Leif Eiríkson Club, were at the head table.

Judge W. J. Lindal, president of the Icelandic Canadian Club and chairman of the evening welcomed the founding of the new club. He described the relationship of the two groups, the younger and the more mature, as

one of co-operation with representation in matter of mutual interest.

In extending greetings to the Leif Eiríkson Club, Prof. Skuli Johnson said: "In choosing to carry the name of Leif Eiríkson the Club has designated itself as an organization of adventure and discovery. Leif Eiríkson sailed westward and discovered America;—yours is a spiritual venture eastward to re-discover Iceland for yourselves and for others."

By combining the cultures of two civilizations, the club would be furthering good Canadian citizenship, said Professor Johnson. "One can love grandmother Iceland without loving less Mother Canada".

Responding to the greetings, Dr. Gestur Kristjánson, president of the Leif Eiríkson Club stated the aims of the organization and outlined briefly the immediate objectives they had in mind. His remarks are published elsewhere in this issue. **W. K.**

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## Collects Rare Violins

The *Félags Blaðið* of Los Angeles Icelandic-American Club mentions in its December issue that Mr. and Mrs. Stefan Kolbeinson from Kindersley, Sask., were visiting in L.A. in the fall. Mrs. Kolbeinson had a pleasant reunion with a former school mate, Mrs. Nina Halperin, (who is known to the readers of the Icel. Can. for her contributions to the magazine) while Mr. Kolbeinson had a specific artistic reason for going to Los Angeles.

Mr. Kolbeinson's hobby is to collect rare violins. (for details about the musical Kolbeinsons read "Farm Boy Builds Organ, Icel. Can., Winter, '46) and when he heard of one in L.A. he went down there to inspect it and later bought it for \$6,000.00. With all the musical instruments that have been collected in the Kolbeinson home, Stefan hopes that a few of his eight grandchildren will turn to music and learn to play some of them.

## *Response to Greetings*

To the Leif Eiríkson Club January 30

On behalf of the Leif Eiríkson Club I would like to thank Professor Johnson for his endorsement of our venture, also, the Icelandic Canadian Club for their invitation extended to us to attend this banquet and dance. Further, I'd like to express our appreciation for the consideration shown us by Rev. Eylands, and Rev. Petursson, for granting us the use of the First Lutheran and First Federated church auditoriums for our monthly general meetings.

The aims of the Leif Eiríksson Club are: to promote a common bond of fellowship amongst Canadians of Icelandic descent; to create interest in Icelandic language and culture, and to co-operate with existing groups of similar aims.

Our Club has a general meeting once a month consisting of a business

meeting to discuss problems and formulate policy followed by a social or educational hour. The Club has been divided into smaller groups interested in Icelandic History, Icelandic Language, Music, etc. These smaller groups will meet in private homes where a capable leader will instruct them. These leaders we hope to draw from you. This provides an opportunity for the older Icelandic Canadians to meet the younger and knit together the Icelandic Canadian family.

We are Canadians first, but we can become better Canadians and render a valuable service to our fellow Canadians by absorbing our Icelandic heritage and passing it on to them.

Gestur Kristjánsson, Pres.  
Leif Eiríksson Club

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### CHAMPION BUTTER MAKER IN MANITOBA

Grimur J. Sigurdson, buttermaker at the Maple Leaf Creamery, Lundar, Man., won five first prizes and two seconds and a third in competitions at the Manitoba Dairy Convention held at the Royal Alexandra Hotel in Feb. During the year Manitoba turned out a higher percentage of first grade butter than any other province in the Dominion.

Mr. Sigurdson, who was elected vice-president of the Manitoba Dairy Association at the convention, is a consistent winner in butter making. Among other winners were Larus Bjornson of North Star Co-operative

Creamery, Arborg, award for improvements in buttermaking during the year; and Leo Magnusson, Treherne Creamery for good butter production.



### FIVE-TON SHARK SMASHES SMACK

A fishing vessel put into port this summer at Bremerhaven, Germany, with a 39-foot, five-ton basking shark which it had caught in its dragnet off Iceland.

The shark had destroyed part of the 46-ton ship's superstructure when it was hauled aboard. It had also crushed a 30-ton catch of haddock so flat that the fish had to be tossed overboard.

## IN THE NEWS

### OLAFSON AGAIN HONORED

The Moose Jaw Chamber of Commerce has adopted the idea of naming an outstanding local farmer or rancher each year and according him special honor at their annual meeting. **Olafur Olafson**, of Old Wives, Sask., was the third on this honor list when he was guest of honor at the annual meeting this year and was presented with the Chamber of Commerce Honor Scroll.

"Ollie" Olafson, as his fond friends and acquaintances call him, is now in his 86th year and can look back on interesting and varied experiences as a shepherd (in Iceland) a sailor, railroader and rancher.

Sixty-six of his years have been spent in the mid-west, having arrived at Brandon from his native Iceland in 1887. It was as an employee of the C. P.R. that he first saw Moose Jaw in 1892 and in speaking about the progress of the Chamber of Commerce, he mentioned that when he came there, nothing created more civic interest than the arrival of the C.P.R. pay car.

The grass he saw beyond Moose Jaw arrested him and he began to dream about running cattle on it. In 1903 he gave up railroading, turned to ranching.

An imposing portion of the Olafson story is the part he played in organizing for the benefit of the stock growers. He was one of those who met at Moose Jaw in 1913 to form the Saskatchewan Stock Growers' Association and in the next year he became its president; today he is still honorary president and a member of the executive.

His next campaign was in pursuit of the stockyards, an effort that was climaxed by the opening of the yards at Moose Jaw in 1918. Precisely as one who knows him would expect, Olafson delivered the first cattle to the new yards. He served as president for



**Olafur Olafson**

many years and is still president of the stockyards organization.

The Feeder Show is one more example and again Olafson showed cattle at the first Feeder Show at Moose Jaw in 1923, winning fourth prize.

Since that time he has shown cattle every year and could recite a long list of winnings and championships. But to keep the record of his organizations straight, Ollie told the Chamber of Commerce last month not to overlook the fact that he had organized a temperance league in Brandon in early years and then helped to start the church.

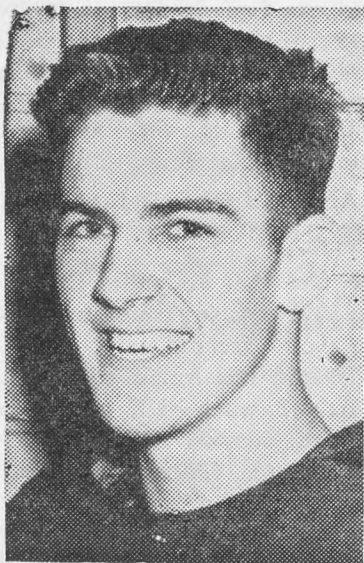
Olafur Olafson is generally conceded to be "the Grand Old Man" of his



district in Saskatchewan., (See Icel. Can., June 1943 and Autumn, 1951, p. 38.)



### LORNE BENSON, Rookie of the Year



Twenty-three-year-old **Lorne Benson**, who last year played professional rugby with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, was voted **Rookie of the Year** and presented with a gold watch for being the most valuable of the new players in the whole of the Western Conference. Lorne has signed on with the Bombers for the coming year.

During his first year with the Bombers, Lorne played in three exhibition games, at Ottawa, Hamilton, and Toronto, as well as in the regular season's competition games in the Western Conference which includes Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary and Edmonton. Last season the Blue Bombers lost out to Edmonton Eskimos, who went East for the Dominion finals.

While in high school at Daniel McIntyre Collegiate, Lorne played in the inter-high school all-star Rugby team,

and he played with the Weston Wildcats Junior Rugby in 1949 to 1951. He won the all-star nomination during these three years and had the unusual distinction of winning two years in a row (1950-51) the Tessler Memorial Trophy for being the most valuable player.

Lorne has also been active in hockey and played professional baseball for Calgary in 1949. That year he was married to Betty Lane of Winnipeg. They have three children, and live in Winnipeg where Lorne is employed with the Canadian Pacific Railway.

An older brother, Marwin Benson, has just signed on for a try-out with the Regina Rough Riders, after playing last year with the St. Boniface Legionaires, an Intermediate Rugby team, which won the Dominion Intermediate Rugby title last year, being the first team ever to bring that honor to western Canada.

Marvin served for a year and a half with the R.C.N.V.R. and was middle-weight boxing champion of his Navy base at Victoria.

Lorne and Marvin are the sons of Mr. & Mrs. C. Richard Benson of Wpg. Mrs. Benson (Albertina) is a daughter of the late Baldwin Halldorsson, and his wife Maria (Olafsdottir) of River ton. Paternal grandparents were the late Egill (George) Benson of Winnipeg and his wife Lovisa, now living in Gimli, Man.

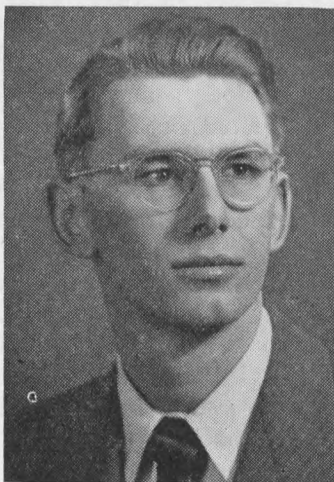


### HEADS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**G. S. Thorvaldson**, Q. C. was elected president of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce at the 74th annual meeting and banquet held at the Royal Alexandra Hotel Feb. 5. Mr. Thor-

valdson is a well known Winnipeg lawyer, and former Progressive-Conservative M.L.A., who had taken an active part in community services.

He is the son of the late Sveinn Thorvaldson, M.B.E. of Riverton, Man. and his first wife, the late Margaret (Solmundson) Thorvaldson.



**Kenneth Leo Melsted**, 4th year student in Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan, was the winner of the Swift Canadian Company essay competition, last fall, open to any student in a college of Agriculture in Canada. His prize-winning essay was on the auction marketing of cattle.

This award brought him an all-expense paid trip to the Royal Winter Fair at Toronto.

Ken is the son of Leo and Anna (nee Teichreb) Melsted of Wynyard. He is 21 years of age and is in his final year toward his degree in agriculture. He farms with his father, one mile from Wynyard, Sask. Their farm consists of seven quarter sections which the family owns plus two quarter sections which are rented.

Ken has also won in three contests in public and High school and was awarded a University entrance scholarship. His paternal grandparents, the late Johannes Melsted, and his wife Johanna, were early pioneers in N. Dakota, and moved to Wynyard around 1910. Mrs. Johanna Melsted now resides with a daughter at Santa Rosa, California.



### ICELANDIC COLOURED FILMS SHOWN

The fact that Icelandic Canadians, young and old, are most anxious to learn about Iceland, and view Icelandic films, was forcibly demonstrated March 13, when Njáll Thoroddsson, of Iceland, showed his films in the First Federated Church, Banning St., in Winnipeg. On that occasion the auditorium was full to overflowing and many were standing.

The three films that he showed are of a documentary nature, and give a good view of some of the activities of the people in Iceland. There is an excellent film showing the various stages in the winter fishing and the processing of fish; a short sequence showing the dairy industry, from producer to consumer, with modern methods being used; and in the 40-minute coloured film there are scenes of various activities from every-day life.

Mr. Thoroddsson is a school teacher from Iceland, who has been studying in Los Angeles for the last six months, and is on his way back to Iceland. He purchased some first class equipment, such as a projector, sound equipment and screen, in the U.S.A., and has shown his pictures in Los Angeles and Seattle. In the former city he was asked

by the authorities after they had viewed his film, to show them in several public schools in the city.

Not claiming to be a professional in the production of films, Mr. Thoroddsson's effort is nevertheless considered very good by those authorities who have seen it, and the large gathering at the First Federated church on Friday night was unanimous in its praise of the films and delight at having had this opportunity of seeing them.

The Icelandic Canadian Club, whose policy is to foster a feeling of friendship between Iceland and our community and country, and to promote an exchange of cultural interests, sponsored the showing of the films, and by doing so extended a courteous welcome to an Icelandic visitor to our city, and gave the residents an opportunity of seeing these documentary films.

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## Thingvalla Pioneer's Story

(Continued from Page 27)

these post offices, the route was called "The Rothbury Round Route".

For the first four years conditions improved at a fairly rapid rate. The herds grew, and the acres brought under cultivation increased.

The seasons lent themselves to the very satisfactory growth of both hay-crops and grain fields, with above average rain fall. But every year brought summer frosts that seriously damaged the grain, and this discouraged many from growing grain, or breaking up more acres for cultivation.

The repeated disappointments in the efforts at grain growing brought the realization that it was unwise to strain limited means in that direction, and so it was generally felt that stock raising, though slow in bringing returns, proved safer. The supply of water was an important factor in the matter of raising stock and caused considerable worry. The large number of wells that were dug were very disappointing, and even the Government well drilling machines were unsuccessful

except in a few cases.

Two small lakes that were fairly centrally located were a wonderful help, and cattle within a radius of 3 miles or more, were dependent on these lakes, summer and winter.

o o o

There now began a noticeable change in the seasons. There was less rain in the growing season, which made a difference in the quantity of hay for the stock, but strangely did not affect crops of grain so much.

The summer frost however made the regular visit, doing more or less damage.

It became a matter of grave concern that each summer had less rain than the previous one, making it more difficult to get sufficient hay for the stock. However by persistent efforts and securing permits on meadows in distant localities, enough feed was gathered for the long winter months.

The summers of 1892 was a severe test of endurance for everyone. Very

little rain fell and the country dried up. The lakes almost disappeared, leaving a slimy puddle the size of an acre or so, and the water not fit for any animal. The cows lost their milk, and anyway the milk was unfit for human consumption.

That summer, all the hay father and I managed to scrape together was four loads in the same area that produced a hundred loads in the good years.

It was our good fortune, however, to get permission to put up hay for our stock about 16 miles north of the settlement, in a district not so severely affected by drought. This hay had to be hauled the 16 miles during winter, by oxen and sleighs, over a bleak prairie, often in 30-below weather.

Following this difficult summer the winter set in early.

The 7th of October 1892 was a memorable day for everyone in our district for that day was the first of a three-day blizzard, when more than a foot of snow fell, accompanied by a wind of almost hurricane velocity. It came on very suddenly at about 3.30 in the afternoon, when all animals were out.

Within a couple of hours the storm became so fierce, that the search for cattle was out of the question, and it is safe to say that 75 percent of the stock in the district were out in that storm.

When the weather cleared the search began and it was found that many herds had drifted a long way from home, driven by the fierce wind over a bleak prairie.

One herd was found to have wandered 30 miles, until reaching the rim of the valley, the animals found shelter in a bluff and were snowed in, in a

hollow. Seven of the herd were smothered to death in the drifts.

Numerous other losses were also reported as in previous years the summer of '92 was struck with a frost, this time a little more severe.

On the night of July 27th, we had 8 degrees of frost, that rendered most grain crops useless. Nevertheless quite a number of the settlers decided to thresh what wheat they had, with the hope of gristing to get the winter's flour for the family.

My father was one of these, and with two neighbors each heaped a double box with wheat bags, that were almost as light as feathers, and the 3 loads drawn by oxen, made the week's journey to the flour mill in Millwood—30 odd miles.

On arriving there the miller told them, the wheat they had brought was of no use for any purpose. But being aware of the discouraging results of hard struggle and earnest effort, and after seriously pondering the situation he decided not to send them away empty handed, and so allowed each one five bags of 4X flour in return for their loads.

This experience did much to dampen the spirits of even the most stout hearted.

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These lines are not written for the purpose of leaving an impressino of a hopeless tale of woe and disillusion, but rather an effort to relate the facts as they occurred, the hard experiences of early pioneers, as clearly remembered, and observed, during this period.

The winter of 1892-93 was long and severe, with heavy snowfall and continued below zero weather.

Melting snow was the only source of



water supply for the stock and this was done nearly everywhere.

The winter dragged on cold and relentless, with never a break, not even a mild spell as sometimes happens in the latter part of February.

In March the feed supply began to run low, and everybody hoped that April would bring relief to the growing anxiety, regarding the feed situation. But in April 27th a storm came up that lasted three full days, and equalled in severity the blizzard of October 7th previously described.

So it was the 1st of May that the sun came out and the thaw started, and the seven month winter ended. In spite of this terrible experience, and unbelievable as it may seem, the loss of stock in our settlement was comparatively small in relation to some neighboring districts.

An extreme case of animal loss from starvation might be mentioned where, of a fine herd of 150 cattle owned by two brothers near Saltcoats, only eighteen animals were left and these were just barely alive.

As the spring advanced it became known that a considerable number had decided to leave the settlement, and give up the struggle against the seemingly insurmountable odds. — The principal reasons for reaching this decision were undeniable, namely the scarcity of water, and repeated occurrence of summer frosts.

The continued dry seasons also added to the determination to leave. Thus the summer of 1893 saw the exodus of a large number of the settlers, some moving northwest to Quill plains and various other locations in that part of Saskatchewan. Others, our family among them, went east and settled along the west shore of Lake Manitoba.

This last mentioned group was the largest.

It would be no exaggeration to say that 75 percent moved away.

It is no discredit to these people that they made this decision when we consider that their patience and endurance had been strained to the utmost limit and the future offered little hope, but it seems ironical, to say the least, that the very summer they moved out, the season changed and the rainfall became above normal, in fact bringing back the promising outlook, so noticeable when these people moved in seven years before.

Those who remained have had variable success, some above average, others have become wealthy.

— The End —

## NORDIC RACES HOLD COUNCIL

King Frederik of Denmark recently opened the first session of the Nordic Council, an unofficial parliament composed of 53 representatives of Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Iceland.

Swedish delegates proposed that home governments pass laws giving common business, social security and legal rights to citizens of the four countries.

The council has no lawmaking powers itself but passes on recommendations to governments.



## CANADIAN ALMANAC

The Canadian almanac and Directory for 1952 comprises 852 pages of closely packed information, holding and enlarging its long-established place as an indispensable reference book in the Dominion's offices, schools and libraries.

Only a small pamphlet in its first

issue 105 years ago, The Canadian Almanac now contains more than 50,000 listings of information in daily use. In addition to the standard almanac data it contains the names of officials, post offices, institutions, societies, the complete customs tariff—in short a handy encyclopaedia of current information about Canada and things Canadian.



### HOW THE U.S. FOUND SIX SOLDIERS WHO SPOKE ICELANDIC

The extensive use of punch cards is told in "Punch Card Techniques and Application", an article in the **Journal of Chemical Education** (Vol. 23, 1946). More than 10,000,000 cards were expended for personnel classification of U.S. forces during World War II. One anecdote illustrates their potentialities. Early in the war the U.S. Army wanted to locate six soldiers who could speak Icelandic. The punch cards were consulted, and within less than forty-eight hours the required personnel were found at widely scattered points and had their travel orders.

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Almost every day, samples of glass from Canadian furnaces are flown to St. Helens, Lancashire, England, for analysis. Within 72 hours the Canadian firms have received a complete analysis of their products.

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